

MA THE CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF ART

Public Information Department, 11150 East Blvd., Cleveland, Ohio 44106; 216/421-7340

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PRESS RELEASE

THE BASKET MAKERS

November 26, 1985 - March 23, 1986

A selection from The Cleveland Museum of Art's exceptionally fine but seldom shown collection of American Indian baskets will be on exhibit at the Museum from November 26, 1985 through March 23, 1986. The baskets, made by Indians of California, Southwest, and Northwest Coast tribes, who have produced some of the world's finest baskets, were collected in the late 19th and early 20th century when these tribes were still making baskets for domestic and ceremonial use as well as catering to the demands of traders and collectors. Beautifully designed and exquisitely woven, the more than thirty baskets in the exhibition demonstrate the extraordinary technical skills and aesthetic sensibilities of the basket makers, almost all of whom were women. The baskets are in an excellent state of preservation, most having been in the custody of the Museum since 1917 when they were donated by a private collector, William Albert Price. Exhibited with the baskets are seventeen photogravures picturing life among the basketmaking tribes and examples of their craft, selected from Edward Curtis's famous portfolios of photographs, The North American Indian, published between 1907 and 1930.

Baskets made by California Indian tribes form the largest group within the exhibition and include bowl and bottleneck baskets as well as two of the basketry hats worn by women of the Karok and Yurok tribes. The baskets of the Pomo Indians of California, which are famous for their colorful and intricate use of feathers, shells and beads, were often produced as gifts to be given at

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ceremonies and weddings. The Pomo baskets range from a large storage basket woven so that it would be watertight to a group of miniature baskets, probably intended as gifts and as demonstrations of the weaver's virtuosity. The exhibition also contains superb examples of the basketry of Indian tribes in Arizona, Washington, and Alaska. Especially interesting is a small wallet designed by an Aleutian Indian for collectors, made from coarse beach grass woven so finely that it resembles linen cloth.

Virginia Crawford, associate curator in the Museum's Department of Later Western Art, who organized the exhibition, The Basket Makers, explains methods of weaving and decoration and interprets basket designs in the labels which accompany the exhibition. An article by Miss Crawford on the Museum's collection of American Indian baskets will appear in the March, 1986, issue of The Bulletin of The Cleveland Museum of Art.

Gallery talks in the exhibition will be given by Barbara Kathman, instructor in the Museum's Department of Education and herself a basket maker, on Wednesday, December 11, at 7:00 pm and at 1:30 pm on Wednesday, December 18; Sunday, December 22; Wednesday, January 15; and Sunday, January 19. Two short films on the basketry of the Pomo Indians (30 and 20 minutes in length) will be shown in the Museum's audio-visual center on Wednesday, January 8, at 12:30 and 7:00 pm.

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For additional information or photographs, please contact the Public Information Office, The Cleveland Museum of Art, 11150 East Boulevard, Cleveland, Ohio 44106; 216/421-7340.